



## bowfin

*Amia calva*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Amiiformes
Family:	Amidae

## Features

The average bowfin weighs two pounds and is 15 to 27 inches long. The body of a bowfin is long and cylindrical with the dorsal fin extending more than half the length of the back. The large mouth has many teeth. The pectoral, pelvic, and tail fins are rounded. The dorsal and tail fins have black bands. A large bony plate is present in the throat. The body is olive-green with a yellow or pale green belly. The male has a dark spot on the tail fin bordered with yellow or orange and the lower fins are bright green during the breeding season. The head does not have scales and the fins do not have spines. Small barbels (whisker-like projections) are present on the upper lip.

## Natural History

The bowfin lives in sloughs and streams, preferring sluggish water with vegetation. It eats fish and crayfish. It is active at night. It reaches maturity at two to three years of age. Spawning occurs from April through June. The female deposits 23,600 to 64,000 sticky eggs that hatch in eight to 10 days. Eggs are

placed in a nest that is constructed by the male on the bottom. The male bites, rubs, and fans silt and plants away from the site. These actions leave a bed of roots, sand, or gravel for the eggs to attach to. The male guards the eggs and young until they reach about four inches long. The bowfin may live for about ten years.

## Habitats

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams

## Iowa Status

common; native

## Iowa Range

eastern edge of Iowa

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.